



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement Rejecting the “Independence Referendum” and Election in Georgia’s South Ossetia Region

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 9, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States Department of State issued a statement yesterday evening regarding the upcoming referendum and elections in South Ossetia scheduled for Sunday. Drawing from that statement, we would like to make the following points. The U.S. will not recognize the “independence referendum” and concurrent so-called “presidential” elections scheduled for November 12 in Georgia’s South Ossetia region. We join the international community in rejecting the referendum and elections.

As the international community has made clear, South Ossetia is a part of Georgia. The United States supports Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. There can be only peaceful solutions to this separatist problem. We call on Tskhinvali and Tbilisi to engage in direct talks, with the broad support of the international community, to find a solution that defines the status of South Ossetia within Georgia’s internationally recognized borders, while affording South Ossetia significant autonomy within a unified Georgia. Confidence-building and other measures, including the international community’s efforts to implement the OSCE’s economic rehabilitation programs, can ease current tensions and help lay the foundation for such talks. The upcoming South Ossetian referendum and elections move in the opposite direction, exacerbating tensions and diverting attention from the need to build confidence and collaborate in resolving the conflict.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.